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The many meanings of special rights: Guess what Virginia Gov. Douglas Wilder was talking about when he recently voiced the following opposition to a proposed law: "It is creating a special class of people that would be given protections that others were not entitled to." If you guessed gay rights, you're wrong. Wilder was talking about a bill he vetoed that would have prohibited job discrimination against smokers. It's hard to imagine liberal Democrat Wilder applying his sound logic to the gay-rights debate, yet his words bear an uncanny resemblance to the eminently reasonable arguments Coloradans used in voting to ban gay-rights laws through Amendment 2. Smokers, Wilder noted, "are inflicting in some instances their own whims and fancies on others, and it is deleterious to health." Sound familiar?

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Pat's shrinking portfolio: In a commendable cost-cutting move, the House Democratic leadership is expected to ax four of the House's "select committees," which take testimony on assorted topics but have no power to pass laws. Among those on the chopping block: Colorado Democratic Rep. Pat Schroeder's Select Committee on Children, Youth and Families, which she chaired. Although the cuts, including 91 fewer staffers, are expected to save taxpayers $3.7 million, all Schroeder could muster in response was sour grapes. "This not only gets rid of pesky groups that remind them they're overlooking children and families, but they get the money, too." OK, Pat, forget the money; America's youth are just better off without you.

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